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## ABSTRACT

Four speakers addressed the College Board National Forum on "Reaching Each Student" in the Fall of 1990 in Boston, Massachusetts. John F. Akers, Chairman of the Board at International Business Machines in his speech "Reaching Each Student: A Business Perspective" challenged the College Board to work with American business to change the educational scene and to meet the needs of citizens both today and in the future. Arthur Ashe, an author and television tennis commentator, spoke from a personal viewpoint about college athletes, academic standards and, in particular, African Americans. The president of Harvard University, Derek C. Bok, gave a speech entitled "Beyond Prediction: New Possibilities in Assessment." In it he discussed the recommendations of a current review of the College Board and its work which includes developing alternative testing formats, attention to the concerns of ethnic groups, and tests for non-native English speakers. Finally, Donald M. Stewart addressed the College Board's Annual Business Meeting by reviewing the ways in which the programs and services of the College Board reach each student. In particular he asked all associated with the College Board to make a commitment to the College Board's Equity Agenda. (JB)

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# Reaching Each Student

## National Challenge and Organizational Commitment

Addresses to the College Board National Forum  
October 31–November 2, 1990  
Boston, Massachusetts

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**Reaching Each Student**  
**National Challenge and**  
**Organizational Commitment**

**Addresses to the College Board National Forum**  
**October 31–November 2, 1990**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**

**College Entrance Examination Board**  
**New York, 1991**

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## Foreword

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Each year, the National Forum brings together representatives of the 2,800 members of the College Board. They convene, in the words of the College Board's charter, to "discuss common problems" and to develop "representative opinion on educational standards." In recent years, these discussions have responded to the national challenge to increase the capacity of our nation's educational system to meet international standards of student achievement.

The theme of the 1990 National Forum, "Reaching Each Student," reflected our association's commitment to meeting that challenge. As a national voluntary partnership of colleges and schools, university and school systems, and state and national educational agencies and associations, the College Board is uniquely situated to reach each and every student and prepare them to meet new standards of achievement.

Three distinguished speakers addressed the national educational challenge at the Forum in Boston. John F. Akers, chairman of IBM, challenged us to join with American business leaders in transforming the American educational system and, in so doing, to renew our national compact with future generations. Taking as his subject the case of minority student athletes, Arthur Ashe, author and commentator, challenged schools and colleges to focus on educational values and academic standards in order to promote minority access to higher education. Derek C. Bok, president of Harvard University, speaking on behalf of a national commission co-chaired by David P. Gardner, president of the University of California, challenged the College Board to move "beyond prediction" to explore new possibilities in assessment designed to "serve a more diverse student population and a wider range of important educational needs."

At the 1990 National Forum, the Board of Trustees took one important step in meeting these challenges. It approved proposals for changes in the SAT.

President Donald M. Stewart, in his address to the 1990 Annual Business Meeting, reviewed the many ways in which the programs and services of the College Board reach each student. Most important, he summoned all associated with the College Board—members, Trustees, and staff—to make a commitment to the College Board's Equity Agenda goal—that by the year 2000, the students entering our colleges and universities and receiving two- and four-year degrees will reflect the diversity of the nation's population at the beginning of the new century.

By publishing these speeches from the 1990 National Forum, we invite the reader to join us in this commitment to reaching each student.

Alice C. Cox  
Chair, The College Board, and  
Special Assistant, Academic Affairs,  
University of California,  
Office of the President, Oakland

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## The Challenge

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"Our shortfall in education is only a part—granted, a significant part—of a much larger shortfall, a failure in the most basic responsibility any society can have: to honor the bedrock compact that runs from one generation to another."

John F. Akers  
Chairman of the Board  
International Business Machines, Inc.

# Reaching Each Student: A Business Perspective

Address by

**John F. Akers**

Chairman of the Board, International Business Machines, Inc.



I am delighted to be here today, where I grew up as the grandson of the principal of Brookline High School, in a city that prides itself on its great institutions of learning. And, I am honored to address this gathering of distinguished educators.

No one of right mind would pretend to have all the answers to our current educational challenges, but you have asked me to speak on the role of business in American education today and I am pleased to give you one businessman's perspective.

Most businessmen and women I talk to believe that our primary and secondary education system today is floundering, whether measured by declining SAT scores, or by drop-out rates, or by comparisons that show American children are being out-performed by children in Japan, Thailand, Hungary, and Poland.

Let me share with you a personal business example. I recently visited two IBM development and manufacturing operations—one in this country, one in Japan. IBM is perhaps the most international of companies, with research, development, and manufacturing in every major country in the world. I was reminded once again that IBM often does it better in Japan than we do in the United States. Same company, same management system, same processes, but yields, turnaround times, development cycle times, costs—all are frequently better in Japan. Why? A good part of the answer is education. Weakened education means a weakened work force, weakened international economic competitiveness, a weakened United States standard of living, and a weakened democracy. Business is prepared to do whatever it can to help, to add to its already extensive record of assistance to education, largely in the local communities of its employees.

In the IBM company alone, for example, some 20,000 men and women—roughly 10 percent of our total United States population—have been participating in partnerships in more than 750 communities across the nation to improve education in grades K through 12. On top of this, the IBM company last year contributed grants totalling some \$20

million for primary and secondary education. But, given the challenge we now face, business now must do even more.

Among many other actions, the Business Roundtable—200 chief executive officers of major companies in the United States—has launched an effort toward the educational goals set by President Bush and the governors of all 50 states. I know what some of you may be thinking: we've heard this before. Business comes in with a lot of fanfare, undertakes some initiatives—often amateurish—and then runs out of gas. Let me just say that this time we expect we'll do better—much better. In the first place, each chief executive of the Business Roundtable companies signed on to a 10-year effort, personally, with increased resources from each company.

We have agreed to focus on state educational policy—the heart of the engine, where many of the policy decisions are made and most of the money comes from. And, we are aimed at thoroughgoing reform: at the building of a transformed education system, with nine essential components that parallel the agenda of your organization—reaching each student.

1. Such a system should rest on some underlying assumptions: that all students in our culturally diverse society can learn both the basic and high-order skills; that we know how to teach all students successfully; that curricula must reflect high expectations; and that every child needs an advocate—someone who cares.
2. Such a system should be judged not by the processes it prescribes but by the results it produces.
3. In such a system we need to do a better job of assessing students' ability to think and solve problems. We must set high standards for everyone in the educational process and devise effective measurements against those standards. We need systematic and rigorous comparisons—which we now lack—of the performance of individual schools, school districts, states, and nations.
4. Schools should receive rewards for success, assistance to improve, and penalties for failure.

5. Each school's staff should have a strong voice in running that school—selecting its personnel, setting its curriculum, writing its budget. How else can we hold staffs accountable for schools' performances?
6. In this new system, we must put more muscle into staff development, including teachers' mastery of subject content and teaching methods, and a strong program for pre-service and in-service training for both administrators and teachers. The men and women in the classrooms must become a world-class professional force. We should hire stars; free them from excessive regulations, reports, and bureaucracy; get off their backs; and let them teach.
7. We must do far better with pre-kindergarten programs—especially for the disadvantaged—to get children ready to learn. For openers, we need full funding for Head Start—a program that incontrovertibly has proved its efficiency and effectiveness. (I applaud the recent congressional action that moves us closer to this goal, one we should reach as rapidly as possible.)
8. We must reduce impediments to learning—do all we can to assure that children do not come to school ill-nourished, sick, and ground down by poverty.
9. We should make constructive use of technology to raise the educational productivity of both teachers and students.

Now there's the Business Roundtable agenda—goals I believe we can all agree on. In the campaign to reach them, business has a role to play. Roundtable members are committed to roll up their sleeves, educate themselves, get into the nitty-gritty of the educational process and work closely with every state government, as well as federal and local authorities, educators, parents, and community leaders. Though the road will be long and hard, I know we can make progress.

A few weeks ago I visited an inner-city primary school in New Haven, Connecticut—one of the most poverty-stricken and drug-devastated cities in the United States. I met with teachers and administrators, students and parents. I learned how, despite the enormous difficulties, New Haven has sharply cut its drop-out rate in the past seven years; how the school district pays to help needy students prepare for and take the SAT and visit college campuses; and how a strong and rising percentage of the district's high school graduates now go on to postsecondary education. Leadership—from the superintendent, the principal, teachers, parents (there were parents everywhere in the school)—was obvious. The kids were all in uniform. Computer technology was in use. Every child goes through

the Writing-To-Read program. It was an emotional morning for me and I shared everyone's pride in what was being accomplished. If it can be done in New Haven, it can be done anywhere in America.

But can we stop here—stop with the transformation of our educational institutions alone? The answer is no. Our shortfall in education is only a part—granted, a significant part—of a much larger shortfall, a failure in the most basic responsibility any society can have: to honor the bedrock compact that runs from one generation to another.

Two centuries ago Tom Paine phrased it simply: "If there must be trouble, let it be in my day, that my child may have peace." What have we done with that commonsense idea in recent years? I think we've turned it upside down to read: "If there is to be affluence and good living, let it be in our day; and let our children have the trouble." We have cannibalized the compact: stolen from the future for the present; stolen from our descendants for ourselves.

We all know the particulars. We have raised federal spending as a percentage of our gross national product, largely for entitlements—payments that now consume nearly half the federal budget and dwarf nearly two-to-one our spending for national security. We've failed either to curb this spending or to raise revenues to pay for it. We have borrowed the difference, in great measure from non-Americans, and we have ballooned the federal deficit to \$220 billion in the fiscal year just ended. We have saddled future generations with a debt that now exceeds \$3 trillion, with interest payments every year that eat up one dollar in every seven of our federal outlays.

It was Robert Louis Stevenson who said, "Politics is perhaps the only profession for which no preparation is thought necessary." But it is we citizens who, in the final analysis, were content to let it all happen to us. We have lived it up with automobiles and TV sets and VCRs and, you name it, from Japan, Germany, Korea, and other countries. We haven't paid for these by selling them American products of high quality and low cost because we don't produce enough of them, and therefore we have had to sell them things they will agree to accept—United States Treasury bonds at high rates of interest, and land and buildings from Honolulu to Pebble Beach to Manhattan—the patrimony we might otherwise pass on to our children.

Look at the way we've raised our gross national product over the past 15 years. Did we do it primarily by saving as our competitors do, investing in new plant and equipment and strongly increasing our productivity? No. We took another route to increase our GNP. We put more people into the labor force—millions of them, largely women formerly in the home. Women have made—and are making

and will continue to make—an incalculable contribution to our economy. But that contribution, coupled with the work-time absence of men from the home, exacts a price. Despite our countervailing arrangements, our professional child-care skills, who—at least in some measure—has been paying that price? Our children. Our children, and their education.

Education must begin in the home, with parents—mothers and fathers—putting in time getting children ready to enter kindergarten, reading to them, listening to them, answering their questions, making sure they do their homework, rationing TV, getting involved at school, working with their teachers, extending children's learning experiences. And—perhaps most important—teaching them something about distinguishing right from wrong, good from bad; establishing at the earliest possible age the expectations we have for our children and making sure they understand those expectations.

I was shocked—as you surely were—to read recently the results of a survey of school children conducted by Robert Coles, a professor at Harvard, who asked how many would try to cheat—look at another student's paper—on a test. Among elementary children, he found 21 percent would. Among high school students, 65 percent. What's going on? We cannot tolerate this moral erosion.

There are many obstacles: single parents with full-time jobs; families with two parents, both working—many having to work to make ends meet; illiterate adults, or adults on drugs, or adults who have simply abandoned their children. Because of these problems, business and government must do all they can, with day-care centers, with programs like Head Start, with encouragement to employees to work with children and schools.

But this plain fact remains: if we as parents, whatever the reason, don't have the time or the energy or the ability or the inclination to do these things, we as a nation have our priorities wildly wrong. We can't go on like this. We can't go back to a bygone world of all-male wage earners. We have only one alternative that makes sense: we must find a way to organize our society to assure, simultaneously, vigorous economic productivity, abundant career opportunities for both men and women, and plentiful child-nurturing time for parents—both parents.

The time has come for all of us—in government, education, and business—to launch a sustained, intensive examination of this most significant national problem and to recommend specific steps our schools, workplaces, and homes can take to accomplish those three ends, and to follow through with action. To help get this process started, I can think of no better organizations than the College Board and the Business Roundtable.

For this and all the challenges we face, what do we as citizens need? Two things, I believe. First, realism—unflinching resolution to face facts, ask tough questions, concentrate on the basics. Second, discipline. Discipline that leads parents to put their children—and their children's education—first; schools to commit themselves to turn out winners; corporations committed to eliminate shoddy work and achieve world-class efficiency and quality; and discipline that leads federal, state, and local politicians to look beyond today's comforts and next week's elections to the enduring good of this country.

"I must study politics and war," a Bostonian, President John Adams, wrote, "that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy." His sons, he said, should study mathematics and philosophy, commerce and agriculture, so that their sons might study poetry, music, and painting. Our national compact was set by men like John Adams and Tom Paine. It has been repeatedly renewed. With realism, and discipline, and hard work, you and I can renew it once again.

# Reaching Each Student: A Personal Perspective

Address by

**Arthur Ashe**

Author and ABC Tennis Commentator



Ms. Cox, President Stewart, College Board members and officials, educators, and, judging from the College Board's unprecedented media coverage of the last couple of days in New York City, any innocent bystanders who happen to be in the room. Seldom have I seen a conference like yours that is not located in New York City receive so much media coverage. The College Board is all over the news. I don't know what the postmortems are going to look like, but it's heartening to read that most of the comments are favorable.

Last December, at a meeting I attended, I met a woman who was an admissions officer at a prestigious school. I asked her, "With the news media full of the controversy over the validity of standardized testing and all these alleged biases, tell me, how the hell do you people decide who gets in and who doesn't?" She replied, "Grades, test scores, and extracurricular activities. Things like that." "And," I asked, "What about the test scores, which are so controversial?" She said, "A lot of us publicly downplay test scores and say we really don't value them that highly, but we really do." That candid comment was very significant for me because one of the few public discussions of standardized testing and admissions policies that everybody reads about has to do with athletes. So, when President Stewart asked me if I would say a few words today, I quickly said yes.

When I sat down to write a few preliminary notes, I realized five minutes into my outline that my presentation would be among one of the most important that I would make in quite a while, because of the audience. I would like first to make a few comments about college athletics and the need to individualize the assessment of minority high school student athletes in particular. My comments are based on personal experience—my own particular example of having gone from a beginning athlete introduced to a sport, all the way through the professional ranks, and, ultimately, retirement.

Let me first put some numbers on the few key areas of discussion. At the 300 NCAA Division I colleges, the two major revenue-producing sports—football and basketball—

involve roughly 10,000 African-American basketball and football players. The American Council on Education (ACE) says that yearly tuition at four-year colleges now averages over \$10,000 a year. The ACE figures also show that the average time for graduation is about 5.5 years. Being conservative, and using five years as the factor, 10,000 students, times \$10,000 per year, times five years is one-half-billion dollars for African-American basketball and football players' tuition. Now what would happen if you were to give that money to a representative group of African-American educators and say, "Here, here's half-a-billion dollars. Spend it the way you think would be best served." Do you think that \$500 million would go to athletes? The answer is—absolutely not.

I've just come back from Japan where priorities differ from ours. I've spent a lot of time in Japan, enough time so that I have a lot of friends over there. We talk about the relationship between the United States and Japan. The comments made over the last four years by some Japanese ministers about minority Americans, and how Japan thinks it will generally stack up against the United States in the years to come, are illuminating. There are three reasons why most Japanese think they're going to win the economic competition between the United States and Japan. One reason is that the Japanese work harder than Americans do. They go to school longer and have exam preparation sessions (*juku*) on the side. Second, as the business community knows, the Japanese plan for the long run. And third, Japanese standards are higher than ours. In the long run, that's going to be telling.

Having said all that, let me focus some comments on what we can do for our student athletes, because we clearly need to change some of the things we've been doing in the past. I am in general agreement with many of the suggestions made by experts who've studied the problems of student athletes. I'll just run through a few recommendations very quickly.

I agree with extending the length of time a student athlete can matriculate beyond the four currently allowable years of NCAA competition, and five years of scholarship. We

should appoint independent academic advisers who are not answerable to the athletic director for student athletes, and we should make freshmen ineligible for varsity competition. When I was at UCLA, I couldn't play varsity as a freshman. It was a good idea for me, even though I thought I was doing fairly well in school. We should curtail the playing schedule, set a ceiling on the number of hours per week for practice, and set a reasonable limit on the amount of walking-around money, as I call it, student athletes can receive. We should create a Miranda-like procedure whereby high school student athletes are read their NCAA rights, which President Stewart has said the College Board is interested in helping disseminate to all potential college athletes. We should require colleges and universities to publish their graduation rates for athletes, which will soon be congressionally mandated. We should outlaw athlete-only dorms and allow easier transfers from colleges penalized by the NCAA, the so-called death penalty, which basically hurts the athlete more than the college. We should tie the number of future scholarships to graduation rates or academic performance, and raise or eliminate altogether the pitiful minimums like 2.0 grade-point averages and 700 SAT scores.

This academic playbook of suggestions—to use an athletic metaphor—is well-intended, commendable, and worthy of consideration. In fact, I wish all of the aforementioned suggestions were adopted. But let me drop back into the pocket of practicality and read the defense spread out before the average 18-year-old student athlete and, in particular, in the two revenue-producing sports of football and basketball, a defense that in many ways shelters and confuses and tantalizes these would-be Michael Jordans and Joe Montanas.

When a typical high school senior of today was born back in 1972, their homes received about five television channels, three of them network channels. Now, the average is 20 channels and, in some places, 40 or more. In 1972 there were nine cable services available. Today there are more than 50 channels, plus eight pay-for-service channels, and 60 percent of all homes now subscribe to some basic cable service. In 1972, when these seniors were born, there were less than 75 full-power independent stations, which increased in 1980 to 129. Today there are 344. In 1972 there were hardly any VCRs, but in 1979, 480,000 of them were sold. Today, 61.5 million households have VCRs. So what does this mean? It means that you and other defenders of academic standards are basically howling among yourselves because the most popular programming on television for everyone is sports. Historically, all of the top ten most widely watched television shows have been sports presentations. Ask any sports-crazy teenager who the five-million-dollar man is and they will tell you reflexively, Jose Canseco, and they will also add that Michael Jordan is worth more than that.

Teenagers know who wears which designer shoes. Teenagers have seen movies like "Do the Right Thing" four or five times. This dreamworld is their cocoon, which, to a large extent, negates the influence of parents, guardians, teachers like yourselves, counselors like yourselves, and the well-intentioned efforts of admissions officers like yourselves. Teenagers constitute their own pack and they howl louder than you do. But there is hope. There is support in a constituency out there that is prepared to howl a little longer and a little louder. Their rationale ranges from a refusal to lower already diminished standards to an outright refusal to cave in to short-term expediency, something my Japanese friends mention.

On the heels of my public comments about Proposition 48, I had almost a dozen letters from African-American parents saying they resented having their children lumped in with athletes in college who supposedly cannot do the work, or who are on campuses basically because they are superior athletes. According to those parents, it was the double standard that they most resented. How was it, they wrote, that athletes with a 2.0 GPA and an SAT score of 700 are inundated with offers of full scholarships while their own nonathlete children with 2.75 GPAs and 850 SAT scores didn't even get a sniff from some Division I colleges? These are important questions and ones to which athletic reforms would do well to listen.

There are, as I see it, three convergent currents flowing in the conversations about athletic reforms. First, for any systemic change to occur, the entire sequence of events—from recognition of athletic talent to retirement—must be addressed. Second, we must consider that a crucial window opens during the last two years of high school, when standardized tests are taken and the first real indications are apparent concerning the likelihood of landing an athletic, grant-in-aid scholarship. Third, we must recognize that the low NCAA admissions criteria are out of sync with the admissions parameters of most of the 300 colleges in Division I. They're out of sync with the over-arching subject of minority access to higher education, and they're out of sync with the need for the United States to strengthen its ability to compete globally.

The typical sequential life cycle for a dedicated athlete, even for someone like myself, goes as follows. Between the ages of seven and eight a child begins participating in several sports in public parks, boys' and girls' clubs, and schools. He or she watches these activities on television and internalizes and idealizes a goal of professional play. That child then meets his or her first mentor/coach surrogate parent who helps narrow the range of athletic choices and positions. He or she begins competing at around the age of 10 or 11. This is a very crucial time. It is at this age of 10 or 11 that children—minority children in particular—

begin to separate from the norm. They seem to do all right through grade three, and then they start to focus on athletics and neglect academics. When students reach the age of 13, the onset of puberty, coaches begin local networking about hot prospects. Serious recruiting from junior high schools and clubs begins. Scouting services for the professional sports pick up press notices, and high school recruiting begins.

Most professional teams have retainers with regional scouting services that have 13- and 14-year-old athletes in their data bank. Mentoring becomes quite specific as a go-between for college scouts. Testing in the junior year narrows the choices even more. Selecting colleges becomes serious business with visits, interviews, and so forth, according to NCAA procedures. A student who attends college with an eye to becoming a professional athlete plays as long as possible, uses up eligibility, and either graduates, turns professional, continues toward graduation, or quits. That's the typical life cycle of student athletes from the age of seven or eight upwards.

Systemic changes, I believe, cannot be effected unless the entire process, this life cycle, is fully appreciated. And it is the connection between these disparate phases that is frequently lost on some reformers. For instance, a student athlete who slides by in public school with inflated grades knows that he or she is trying to short circuit the process, and while these kids may be formally unprepared academically, they are certainly not lacking in street smarts. These are capable kids, but they are subject to many different pulls and pressures.

While the causality between academic unpreparedness and low college graduation rates is obvious to all of us, a not so obvious connection might be gleaned from the psychological consequences that childhood poverty and poor self-esteem have on many students. This is something I understand that admissions officers are starting to identify and address on an individual basis. In addition, because they appear to be so confident, most people do not think of athletes as being short on self-esteem. Yet, we now know that much of the front paraded by some athletes is in reality a coping mechanism for their own insecurities. It is precisely because some of these causal relationships are often overlooked among the matrix of success factors for entering freshmen that admissions professionals, like yourselves, are asked to come up with other ways of assessing and supporting student athletes who don't fall within your normal range for college admission.

The last two years of high school are the most crucial years in an athlete's entire life. It is a make-or-break time for him or for her. By then, some 75,000 high school students active in football and basketball have actually set their

sights on a scholarship. But I, and others, would like to see the riot act read to all beginning varsity athletes at the start of high school, informing them of what is expected, when and why, and what the consequences of noncompliance will be. It sounds simple, but it's not done.

We also need to lobby the various state athletic commissioners to change the no-pass/no-play rule to something more definitive. No-pass/no-play was popularized by the study that H. Ross Perrot did of high school athletics in Texas some years ago. No-pass/no-play means a student athlete in high school can play, even though their grades include six Ds.

Most relevant to what admissions officers are currently facing is the need to cope with the impasse created by those who want to increase minority access to higher education, and those who want to maintain and, indeed, raise the educational standards for all college freshmen. There seems to be public agreement on the actual need to increase minority enrollment, if for no other reason than a looming shortfall in the work force. The message from Congress is that our national legislators would much rather raise the immigrant quota than take the time and expense to educate those who are already here. There is also agreement that ethnic discrimination does still exist throughout the system, and that the access dilemma is by no means confined to African Americans.

Some college environments are either nonsupportive or antagonistic toward some minorities. Currently we're seeing more ethnic problems on more campuses than we have in recent history. This seems to reflect an overall lack of national will to improve public school education.

As a *New Yorker* for 20 years, just last week I read of the outrage by New Yorkers over our school teachers' 5.5 percent pay raise, which I thought was too low. We need every teacher we can find. Schools with substantial minority enrollments are usually assigned the most junior and the least experienced teachers. They are the ones, so *The New York Times* said this morning, who are going to bear the brunt of the \$94 million budget cuts.

The lack of unanimity over the use of standardized test scores for athletic eligibility is seen by many athletic administrators as an excuse to do nothing different from what they've been doing in the past. There are still Division I colleges that have graduated less than half-a-dozen minority basketball players since 1980. There are some colleges that have not graduated a single African-American basketball player in 10 years. Other student groups on many campuses are openly challenging admissions policies that allow a disproportionate number of athletes to enroll. The most telling set of numbers that demonstrate this lack of unifor-

mity and consistency is that 58 percent of Division I college basketball players and 38 percent of their football players are African American, while the student body is collectively only 6 percent African American. That is more graphically displayed if you walk onto a typical Division I college campus and stop every fourth African-American male. The odds are greater than 50 percent that he would be an athlete.

For a lot of African Americans, the 6 percent figure means they're competing in a zero-sum game. If this low number—25 years after the Civil Rights Act and 20 years after Southern, traditionally white, universities began opening their doors—doesn't increase, and continued preference is given to African-American athletes as opposed to African-American or minority students in general—where are the seats for the children who are not athletes?

The most important modification that universities can make, if we want to send the right message to everyone, is really to make no modification at all. Instead, let the public know what the subjective criteria and objective ranges are for college admissions, and abide by them. Then we can judge the results—who is graduating four, five, or six years later—so that no student can say that their degree is devalued or compromised by lowered or prejudicial admission standards for some groups.

Admittedly, you have a very difficult task ahead of you, and if we are to prosper as a people, you will have to do it very well. At Aetna Life and Casualty, where I'm a board member, we're adopting the letters QFR. You have to be Quick, you have to be Flexible, and you have to be Right. Let us not give future historians an excuse to say, in the year 2010, that we were too timid to make the tough cuts.

# Beyond Prediction: New Possibilities in Assessment

Address by

**Derek C. Bok**

President, Harvard University



It's a great pleasure to speak to you this afternoon on the work of our Commission on New Possibilities for the Admissions Testing Program. I should say by way of introduction that I come with some trepidation to speak to a new audience on anything as prickly and controversial as standardized tests.

How did I get myself into this predicament? As Robert McCabe, your chair, pointed out, 90 years ago my predecessor, Charles William Eliot, was instrumental in starting the College Board examinations. James B. Conant, some years later, was also a supporter of standardized tests, and of the Educational Testing Service (ETS). And perhaps that is the reason, at least a sentimental reason, why President Stewart asked me to co-chair, along with David Gardner, president of the University of California, a commission that would examine what has become of Eliot's idea and where the College Board might go in the future.

As you all know, Eliot and his colleagues saw the need for a common measure of ability to evaluate what was already becoming an increasingly diverse pool of college applicants. That idea, I think, is as sound today as it ever was. But everything else has changed dramatically since Eliot's day. The number of test-takers has grown far beyond any number that Eliot could ever have imagined. The art of constructing tests has become much more sophisticated. The tests are used in ways that would never have been foreseen—to award national scholarships, to determine the eligibility of college athletes, to measure the quality of schools and even the academic prowess of the nation's youth as a whole.

But as we know, if power and visibility come, then conflict and criticism will not be far behind. Any instrument that helps to shape important decisions in the lives of millions of young people will be scrutinized very carefully and subjected to frequent attacks. In addition, any organization that can influence the behavior of millions will be strongly urged to use its influence to achieve a variety of beneficial

social ends. Certainly, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and other tests of the College Board have amply illustrated precisely these tendencies.

It was against this backdrop of criticism, of questioning, coupled with an acute sense of pressing educational needs in our nation, that we began our review of the College Board and its work.

We considered two approaches in dealing with the kinds of charges and appeals for help that had come to the Board in recent years. One could try to rebut the criticisms and ignore the pleas, arguing that the Board is simply there to do a particular job—in this case, to help college admissions officers with somewhat more information than they otherwise would have had when choosing an entering class. In the alternative, one could look hard to see what underlay the criticisms—what the society truly needed, and then try to respond to the criticisms and the needs to the extent that one could without compromising the essential mission.

There is undoubtedly something to be said for the first approach. Good arguments exist with which to rebut the critics. Some of their complaints are without substance while others result from misuses or misapplications of the SAT that are not really the fault of the Board. After all, the College Board has never asked teachers to take class time to prepare the students for the tests; it never approved the use of SAT scores to judge the quality of a school or its principal; and it has never condoned the money that is spent on trivial cram courses. As for the problems of the nation's schools, weighty though they are, these are hardly the responsibility of the Board. The Board cannot solve them, and whatever it tries to do will never be enough.

These arguments would be understandable. And yet, I think that few of us would be particularly proud of the College Board for taking either one of those approaches. The Board, after all, was conceived as a nonprofit organization to improve the process of education, broadly conceived. In light of that beginning, it would be false to the College Board's tradition not to do its best to learn from its critics,

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and even more important, to address an urgent set of national problems in educating young people.

As you know, the performance level of our high school students has now drifted down, as David Gardner and his commission so eloquently informed us, to being among the lowest of all industrial nations. Increased diversity has placed well-known burdens and challenges on our schools. Budget cutbacks in recent years—with tax revolts and the like—have reduced the resources for academic counseling and guidance and other forms of student assistance. Dropout rates have increased a bit and remain uncomfortably high, especially for minority groups. Those problems are urgently important to us all, and that is why, with the wholehearted support of the College Board, we have tried, in our commission report, not simply to defend the SAT or to ignore the nation's educational problems, but to look for ways in which these tests could serve a wider set of educational needs and thus play a more constructive role at a time when education in this country needs all the help that it can get.

Specifically, the commission has tried to be responsive to the following purposes. The primary aim, of course, must be, as it always has been, to aid college officials in predicting academic performance as one factor in deciding which students to admit to their institutions. In addition, because of the urgent need to improve teaching and curricula in the nation's high schools, we have urged the College Board to try to construct tests that will emphasize basic skills and substantive knowledge in ways that will reinforce sound academic curricula in the schools and discourage unproductive efforts and wasted time teaching students to outwit the test-makers.

In recognition of the economy's growing need for people with postsecondary education, we have also counseled the College Board to look for new ways of reaching people—both young and old, in and out of school—to help them attend a college suited to their needs.

Because of the growing diversity of our student population in terms of their background and the nature of their preparation, we have further urged the Board to pay greater attention to including tests that will help colleges to advise and place students of widely varying skills and proficiencies. In this way, students can gain more from their education and graduate at higher rates of frequency.

Finally, we commend the College Board for its long-standing consideration of the legitimate concerns of ethnic groups, and we have offered some suggestions as to how to pursue this important objective even further. It is with these broad aims in mind that the commission's report includes the following recommendations.

We begin our report by reviewing a set of proposals to change the SAT in ways that will reinforce sound teaching practices by emphasizing reading and math problems that resemble more closely the actual skills that are required in high school and in college. Without going into all of the details, which perhaps you know already, let me mention one among those being proposed that we strongly endorse. It is to introduce a significant number of math questions that require students to produce their own solutions rather than simply choose among a set of predetermined answers in a multiple-choice format. This is an innovation that emphasizes active thinking more than simply recognizing a correct answer. It tends to discourage the forms of coaching to outwit test-makers which are likely to accompany multiple-choice tests. As such, it strengthens sound teaching in high school classrooms. The commission strongly supports changes of this kind and others like them. We regard them as a first step. We urge the Board to make further efforts to move away from the multiple-choice format as quickly as technological and financial constraints permit.

We also make a series of recommendations to strengthen and diversify the Achievement Tests. We endorse the idea of a new writing test that will take the place of the Test of Standard Written English and the English Composition Test. Perhaps the most important feature of the new test of writing will be a 20-minute written essay, which represents again a useful step away from a purely multiple-choice, short-answer format. We hope that it will be a test widely used and that it will send a signal to high schools about the importance of teaching good writing in the classroom. We further suggest that Achievement Tests be supplemented by tests that reflect changes in educational needs and changes in our student population. For example, we hope that the history test will be expanded to include areas and civilizations other than North America and western Europe. At a time when the interests of this country and its people extend to every region of the world, our students should have global understanding. In like fashion, we hope that the language tests will be extended to include such major languages as Japanese and Chinese, in light of their mounting importance to this country and their growing popularity on many university campuses.

We also urge the College Board to develop a test that will determine the level of English proficiency for non-native speakers. It is clear that more students are applying to college who are not native speakers of English and whose families do not speak English. A good test of this kind can help admissions officers to evaluate such students to determine whether low scores on other tests are reflective of some fundamental difficulty or simply a result of problems with the English language that presumably can be remedied quickly once the students come to college.

Finally, we recommend the addition of tests to help in the placement of students with lower skills and lower proficiency, especially in basic subjects such as math and English. Experiments that impressed the commission show that increasingly large fractions of our students enter college with marked deficiencies in mathematics and English and that their ability to finish college successfully is greatly enhanced by proper placement and remediation. For this reason, we feel that better tests for these students can help identify those with lower proficiency and thus help to place them appropriately, which will facilitate and enhance their chances of getting the most out of their education.

All these proposals will broaden the usefulness of Achievement Tests. Nevertheless, these Achievement Tests are still optional and will presumably be taken, as they have been taken in the past, by only a minority of college applicants. We on the commission consider this situation to leave something to be desired.

We believe that the strongest kind of test would be one that combines tests of general developed ability with tests of achievement. A test of general proficiency or developed ability, like the SAT, is helpful and necessary to identify talented students and to ensure that students are neither penalized nor overlooked simply because they went to an inadequate, ineffective high school. But Achievement Tests also serve very important purposes significant to our educational needs at the secondary school level. They reward hard work. They reinforce sound academic curricula. They discourage efforts to teach students simply to outwit the test-makers rather than to learn material of genuine value. Achievement Tests also aid in making placement decisions.

Because of these several advantages, we favor assessments that combine both tests of general developed ability and tests of achievement. This, as you know, has always been impossible because it would require a test of unworkable length. We are persuaded, however, that new technology is at hand that will offer ways to overcome this obstacle. Hence, our most substantial, far-reaching proposal is to urge the College Board to move as quickly as it can to develop a single test that will combine tests of general developed ability, like the SAT, with tests of achievement. The new technique that makes this possible is computer-adaptive testing. Computer-adaptive testing avoids making every student take the same exam, but quickly guides them to questions of appropriate difficulty for each particular test-taker. In this way, students do not have to take the time either answering questions that are too easy or pondering questions that are too hard. As a result, they can complete tests in approximately half the present time. Students under this format could thus take both SATs and a battery of Achievement Tests in a single sitting.

It will naturally take some time to develop new tests of this kind to overcome the logistical problems of giving millions of students access to computers in order to take the tests and to ensure that the tests are fair and proper. But it is realistic to expect that computer-adaptive tests will be ready for use within 10 years, and the commission strongly urges the College Board to try to meet this deadline.

In our view, properly conceived, an integrated test of general ability, developed ability, and achievement will do more than anything else to serve the public aims that we consider important. It will continue to provide a universal measure of academic proficiency and, in fact, do an even better job of evaluating the developed ability of students, particularly at the high and the low end of the spectrum. It will also encourage strong academic curricula in the high schools in response to the academic achievement tests included in this integrated version. It will reward hard work on the part of the students in mastering important skills and bodies of knowledge. Because it will allow all math questions to ask for student-produced answers, it should encourage more constructive ways of preparing for the tests. And it will provide a richer body of information with which to assess a more diverse student body and to place students in appropriate courses and places within educational institutions.

Such a test, serving multiple purposes, cannot be called, simply, a scholastic aptitude test. And so we make one further recommendation—that the tests we have described be classified as parts of a scholastic assessment test. This wording, of course, has the virtue of preserving the familiar acronym SAT. The use of the word “assessment” provides a broader term that more accurately reflects the diverse purposes and scope of the test we envisage.

Finally, we make a number of suggestions to the College Board to expand the reach of its tests to added groups of potential college students at a time when we need to encourage as many students to go to college as we possibly can. For older students not now in college, we urge a battery of tests at reasonable costs in an effort to reach this growing audience of potential applicants to obtain better knowledge of their abilities and their prospects for enrolling in a college suitable to their needs.

For younger students, we suggest new tests appropriate for grades 7 through 9 that will not be designed to screen anyone out but rather to encourage them and their parents to think constructively about college at an early age. These tests will help students to seek the preparation and emphasis in their studies that they need, based on these assessments, to help them gain admission to a college appropriate to their needs and their desires. There are preliminary indications to suggest that early testing of this kind can enhance

and stimulate interest among young people in going to college, and help them prepare for the college of their choice. In these ways, the Board may be able to serve the interests of more students and respond to the needs of an economy that requires a more highly educated work force.

These are our principal recommendations. In stressing their advantages, however, I do not want to leave you with any sense that we are unaware of their limitations. The commission believes that the tests in use have a definite value. We hope that our proposals will help to make them better and expand the needs they serve.

But tests continue to offer only a limited ability even to predict first-year college grades. They provide little or no help in assessing other traits of great interest to admissions officers, as many of you in this audience know. How much determination does a student have to persist through college? How much creativity does an applicant have? How much ability to use knowledge and skills and apply them with judgment to practical situations? We all have our list of traits that we would ideally like to see evaluated. Probably some of them never will be measured, but there are possibilities of being able to do a good deal better in this area than we have up until now.

Tests tell us a good deal about what students already know and something about how well they will perform in college. But tests are not very good at telling us why students do not know something or have trouble learning it. In view of these limitations, we urge the College Board to continue as resolutely as it can in the search for more versatile and more reliable diagnostic measures. There is a lot of work going on that holds a great deal of promise for interesting advances on this and other fronts.

New research in psychology may throw light on multiple intelligences and ways of identifying creativity, on the ability to make practical use of knowledge, and other items of that kind. There are computer simulations, expert systems, interactive video—all of which provide a wealth of exciting possibilities for testing a variety of skills in challenging ways.

Further research should allow the Board to move away even further from multiple choice, not only in mathematics but perhaps in other types of test material as well. And certainly we urge the College Board to pursue more work in areas that can help enrich the personalized information it can supply to students, parents, and teachers so that they all may learn as much as possible from test results.

In closing, we regard our report as a serious effort to help the College Board serve a more diverse student population and a wider range of important educational needs. Valuable

as we think our proposals are, however, they are still only temporary measures that will help the Board make the most of what is still quite limited knowledge. Through further investigation, we can look forward to advances that will eventually lead us to methods of assessment far more valid and helpful than anything heretofore conceived. With this prospect in mind, we submit our proposals with enthusiasm, while urging the College Board to press on toward greater improvements, more useful, more reliable, and more versatile instruments than anything we have yet devised. To that great enterprise, I commend the College Board, Educational Testing Service and, indeed, all of us.

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## The Commitment

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"I believe that the Board's commitment to equity will be a principal mechanism by which we integrate and unite our many programs to provide educational leadership to American society and to reach *every* student."

Donald M. Stewart  
President  
The College Board

# Address to the 1990 College Board Annual Business Meeting

Address by  
**Donald M. Stewart**  
President, The College Board



It continues to be an honor for me to serve the membership and Trustees of the College Board as your president. The challenges that we face are interesting, and I am blessed to have great colleagues with whom I work, and a superb Board of Trustees, which has been nothing but supportive. We all take pride in the mission of the College Board and the service we seek to give to our member institutions, their representatives, and their students.

This has been an extraordinary Forum and an extraordinary year. We at the College Board have stood together in the glare of hostile press, and critics, and legislators. We have watched in amazement as such long-term issues as disclosure in New York State have swung in our favor in the courts. And, like the United States government, we are looking at an era of resource constraints. But as a result of this common experience, occasional anguish, but always collegial effort, I believe that the Board is growing, evolving, and, most important, gradually becoming more than the sum of its individual parts, programs, and services.

Yet, as we move toward the Board's centennial and into a whole new era in education—K through college—let me emphasize that the College Board is not here to provide just programs and services. We are here to help provide educational leadership to our nation. That is what our members and Trustees have told us they expect and want.

But the only way to provide true leadership in a time of great change is by acting in a unified manner and as an integrated organization, not a collection of parts, no matter how good individually. And the only way an organization can provide leadership is with vision and goals that go to the heart of problems, and by taking chances and standing up to the tough choices.

This is not merely a rhetorical assertion. If we believe writing, for example, should be a part of precollegiate assessment, then we have to take responsibility to encourage that writing be properly taught to everyone, whether the students are English speaking or those for whom English is a second language. If we believe calculators should be used on tests, then we have to take similar responsibility to see that calculators and familiarity with them are available to

all students, particularly minority and poor students. When I say we, I don't just mean officers, or the staff in New York and the regions, or Trustees. I mean all of us in this complex and amazing 90-year-old organization called the College Board. All the 2,800 colleges and universities, secondary schools, university and school systems, and education associations and agencies.

Over the last year I have given much thought to the issue of vision. And yet I don't know how it might be stated more clearly or cogently than it has been by the title of this Forum: Reaching Each Student. With our two million SATs and our three million FAFs, our more than half-a-million "green books," and our responses to thousands of media calls, it is easy to forget that our achievements are not in statistics but in the quiet, striving, personal lives of each and every student, each and every child, each and every returning-to-school adult here in America. Of course, we also need to understand what we mean by "reaching each student." We are not just talking about a brochure or a folder or a forum or a test, useful as those can be. We are talking about an intervention that is far more central to their lives. Let me illustrate with a story.

One of President John Kennedy's close friends came to visit the family in the awful weeks after the assassination. As he was standing talking, he felt a little tug on his sleeve. Looking down he saw that it was John-John. "Are you a daddy?" the little boy asked. "Yes, I'm a daddy," he replied. "Well," John-John said, "could you pick me up and throw me into the air?"

My apologies for the twinge that I know this gives all of us, but I believe this true story is instructive. We must try to reach every child in this very way. There are far too many children and adults who, beneath their guarded and tough exteriors, feel abandoned educationally— orphaned—who need to be thrown up into the air in a not totally unemotional, instructional, and intellectual way.

Despite the criticisms of education, I believe that this is what education has done for each one of us here. It has lifted us above anything we have known previously. It has delighted us and given us a new view of things. It has

allowed us to be curious. At the same time it has, despite our great and wonderful diversity, reaffirmed our attachment to a common world culture, a culture based on learning which, like a caring parent, can both enlighten, broaden, and embrace us.

To make this point in a somewhat more formal way, let me read from a recent piece in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, by Stephen Weiner. Weiner writes, "All study is intended to break down the narrow certainties and provincial wisdom with which we are born." And he adds, in a comment very relevant to the mission of the College Board, "Today's students will come to maturity as parents, workers, and voters, in a world that has no majority." I believe that the Board's commitment to equity, through its Equity Agenda, will be a principal mechanism through which we integrate and unite our many programs to provide educational leadership to American society and to reach every student.

But hold that thought for just a moment. In saying that we need to be more than the sum of our programs and services, I am not saying in any way that the parts are not crucial to our collective well-being, or that over the past year we have not provided important leadership or worked together across multiple groups and constituencies.

I began by saying that this has been an extraordinary year. For openers, *The College Handbook* turned 50 this year. It was a landmark at the time it was created and has since served as the standard for all others, combining accurate information with an increasingly important guidance component. How fitting it is that this year we have published the first national, comprehensive *College Board Guide to High Schools*.

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program has also reached an important milestone—its thirty-fifth year of combining a standard of excellence with opportunity for motivated students. Last year almost half-a-million AP exams were presented, and that figure includes over 100,000 by minority students.

In terms of the College Scholarship Service (CSS)—along with a major upgrade to our processing system to accommodate the new demands stemming from the increased federal involvement in financial aid—CSS is also pioneering the pathway to educational borrowing through CollegeCredit. Among its benefits, CollegeCredit will allow students, families, and institutions to take advantage of a more inclusive and ongoing dialogue.

Let me also mention here that, later today, we will be holding the first annual Dan Hall Colloquium honoring someone who left us far too prematurely and who served the College Board and the financial aid community in many

ways, including serving as chair of the CSS Assembly. This is the first of an annual series of explorations dedicated to Dan's commitment to increasing the enrollment and persistence of low-income and minority students in higher education.

In a continuing overview of our accomplishments, not only has admissions testing been front and center through the leadership of our Board of Trustees and the exciting work of the Bok-Gardner Commission on New Possibilities for the Admissions Testing Program, but the computer-adaptive testing initiatives undertaken by the Board with leading community colleges are showing us the way to the future in assessment generally.

Subsequent to our survey of the membership, which I reported on in 1989, this past year has seen a most extensive communications audit, which sets the stage for presenting the Board as an integrated organization dedicated to leadership in education. This year, too, *The College Board Review* has published some ground-breaking articles—like David W. Breneman's analysis of the disappearance of the liberal arts college, an article that was widely quoted in the press and reprinted recently by the American Association of Higher Education in the *AAHE Bulletin*.

We have moved to an exploration of how both the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT) and the Advanced Placement Program can be used as instruments for creating interest and knowledge about college-going in the middle-school years. At the other end of the spectrum, as the Bok-Gardner report clearly indicated, it is time for us to address more fully the importance of adult students in higher education and to develop new programs and services specially designed for them.

As a result of the effectiveness of our programs of government liaison, public policy analysis, and information-gathering in Washington, Albany, and Sacramento, as well as my participation on President Bush's Educational Goals Advisory Committee, and the Mathematics Standards Educational Board, I believe the programs, work, and goals of the College Board have been more widely received and appreciated among federal, state, and local policymakers.

The College Board is also committed to using new technologies to assure effective delivery and use of its programs and services. Some progress is being made by our New Possibilities in Guidance and Counseling, a service-delivery project, particularly in the state of Washington. And thanks to our guidance publishing group, the availability of our products is now on-line on the computer information service known as *Prodigy*. And we continue to upgrade our own computer guidance programs like College Explorer and College Cost Explorer.

We are also moving beyond the completion of the 10-year Educational Equality Project with a profound expansion and revision of the ground-breaking "green book" and "rainbow book" series and the creation of the "thinking" series. These books help teachers with the work of teaching not just a few but all students to become competent thinkers, and brings into existence a new conception of the place of *thinking* in the high school curriculum as integral to successful learning and, therefore, academic achievement.

This is a most cursory list, and yet, taken as a whole, I think the work we have been doing on your behalf is good, and I applaud each of my colleagues for their fine performance. However, along with it, as I began by saying, we need a Board-wide effort, a goal, and an endeavor to which all can contribute, and that of course is our Equity Agenda.

Many, if not all, of you have heard my comments on this subject in previous meetings. You know our Trustees' goal—to close the gap between majority and minority college-going rates by means of a set of interventions around the country. We are working now in six school districts, beginning at the middle-school level, in Providence, Rhode Island; Nashville, Tennessee; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; San Jose, California; in Prince Georges County, Maryland; and in Fort Worth, Texas. The basis of this effort will be programs to ensure the mastery of high school algebra and geometry. The support for this approach is outlined in the monograph published by the College Board under the title *Changing the Odds: Factors Increasing Access to College*.

I know from the response of some of my colleagues that programs to increase minority participation in college-based mathematics may come as something of a surprise, not only to them but to all of you. But what we have seen in this report is the strong association, statistically, between the study of math and success in going on to college and doing college-level work. In many ways this project is experimental, but clearly, in the eyes of both students and schools, mastery of mathematics is an indicator that college is a serious option.

Thus, the College Board's Equity Agenda represents not a definitive solution, but a beginning; not an answer, but a leverage point to create change. And with the help of a \$2 million grant from the Ford Foundation, the effort is launched.

In this regard I am very excited and pleased, too, by the Trustee endorsement of the proposed changes on the SAT and by the report from the Bok-Gardner Commission. What we see in these two initiatives is a strong focus on the needs of all students, a strong commitment to each and every student as he or she prepares to go to college. The changes

that we are proposing, and the longer term vision which the Bok-Gardner report encourages us to embrace, will create an Admissions Testing Program suited to the new populations in America's schools and colleges. The ultimate goal of the program is not just selection but inclusion, a program that in essence encourages schools to provide all students the wherewithal to do their personal best.

Seen in this light, the directions proposed by the New Possibilities Project for the Admissions Testing Program are very similar to the goals of the Equity Agenda and are not unrelated to new directions being taken by CSS and other units of the College Board.

What we have, in fact, is a convergence of College Board programs, a convergence that I ask everyone to nourish and expand, for it is through this convergence around the principle of equity that we can most effectively carry out our leadership responsibilities.

Ultimately, what is leadership if not the willingness and courage to change the status quo? For the past many decades we have had a very successful and relatively comfortable situation at the College Board. But whether caused by demographics, economics, or whatever, in the words of Bob Dylan, "The times, they are a-changin'." And either one gets out of the way or one lends a hand. Or, to view the matter through a Shakespearean lens, "There is a tide in the affairs of men (and women—Shakespeare forgot) which, taken at the flood, leads on to greatness."

This, my friends, is where we now stand—at the edge of the flood tide of change. As an organization we should and must take it at its flood, and no place could be more propitious than Boston—the cradle of American education and democracy—to make a commitment to do so.

To conclude with a thought from John-John's father, President Kennedy, "A rising tide lifts all boats." And isn't this what we came here to Boston to proclaim? Isn't this our goal as well—to reach and to lift each child through education?

I believe it is. And I hope in my heart that you share that vision. And I look forward to another exciting, challenging, occasionally frustrating but ultimately rewarding year of working with all of you as part of this great professional family of the College Board, which can make it all happen.

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